

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 9 November 1987
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The Standing Committee on Employment held its 34th meeting on Thursday 5 November 1987 with Mr DYREMOSE, Minister for Labour of the Kingdom of Denmark in the chair (*).

At this meeting the Committee held an in-depth discussion on long-term unemployment on the basis of a memorandum from the Commission. This memorandum was intended to stimulate a preliminary policy discussion within the Council before the Commission prepared practical proposals.

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman drew the following conclusions:

(*) A list of participants is given in the Annex.

Chairman's conclusions

1. The Committee held an in-depth discussion on long-term unemployment on the basis of a memorandum from the Commission. This memorandum was intended to stimulate a preliminary policy discussion within the Council before the Commission prepared practical proposals.
2. The Committee:
 - expressed concern at the growth of the problem of long-term unemployment in recent years
 - noted that awareness of the scale of the problem has led to and must continue to lead to increased action
 - underlined its commitment to continue such action in order to bring about a major reduction in long-term unemployment.
3. The problem was recognized to be the result of many factors, such as:
 - low rates of economic growth resulting in inadequate job creation
 - continued structural lagging behind of the development of some regions of the Community
 - economic and industrial transformation in the Community which had hit many industrialized areas and which was permanently reducing the supply of jobs
 - the way parts of Community labour markets have functioned in the past, putting an excessive share of the burden of the restructuring process on those who lose their jobs.

4. The Committee noted that improved economic growth and performance were necessary prerequisites for an amelioration in the employment situation in general and a reduction in long-term unemployment in particular. Creation of the internal market is of prime importance in this respect.

In this context, the Committee took note with interest of the joint opinion which was adopted on 6 November 1986 as part of the dialogue between the Social Partners, whereby the Social Partners confirmed their agreement on the basic principles of the Community's "Co-operative growth strategy for more employment" and supported the general thrust of the economic policy set out in the Annual Economic Report 1986-87 adopted by the Council.

5. The Social Partners deplored the financial impasse which the Community is once again confronting, and reiterated their appeal to the European Council to take the necessary decisions on the basis of the Commission's proposal: "Making a success of the Single Act: A new frontier for Europe".

In this context, the Social Partners stressed the necessity of reforming and strengthening the Structural Funds with a view to their improved co-ordination and greater effectiveness, so that they could contribute to a strengthening of the economic and social cohesion of the Community, as laid down in the Single European Act.

6. The Committee acknowledged the impetus to action contained in the Resolution on Employment Growth adopted by the Council in December 1986 and welcomed the Commission Memorandum on action to combat long-term unemployment of May 1987, which set out a comprehensive review of the problem and specific measures currently being pursued in Member States.

7. The Committee considered that improved economic growth and performance need to be accompanied by measures to:

- improve the functioning of the labour market
- raise educational and training levels and adapt their content to present and future requirements.

Whilst the development of such measures could help to prevent recurrence of long-term unemployment on such a scale in the future, they need to be accompanied by immediate actions (which would probably need to be continued over several years) designed to:

- reintegrate those currently long-term unemployed into the labour market
- stop those who become unemployed from drifting into long-term unemployment, through a series of preventive measures.

8. The Committee stressed that a substantial reduction in the overall level of unemployment must be made. Further, there should be a publicly-stated commitment to the long-term unemployed to do the utmost regarding their rights to assistance from the competent authorities with a view to their reintegration in the labour market and/or into schemes for training or retraining for other jobs.

9. As regards labour market measures, the Committee confirmed its commitment to encourage close co-operation between all concerned to make the structure and organization of employment services more dynamic and improve the forecasting of employment opportunities. In this context the conclusions resulting from the Committee's meeting of 24 April 1986 were again noted.

The Committee expressed the view that information provided to job-seekers should not be limited to vacancies in the local area, particularly in view of the creation of the internal market.

10. As regards the development of education and vocational training, the Committee emphasized the need to consider the appropriate form and content of educational and training arrangements necessary to meet the challenge of the fundamental changes taking place in Community employment. Particular emphasis was given to the changes needed to meet the growth of employment in services, the spread of information technology and the increasing need for multiple qualifications.
11. The Committee noted that the Member States had developed a range of measures which made available programmes to match the experiences, aptitudes and needs of those contacting the employment and training services.

Since the specific nature of the problems varied between Member States - with the problem of young people being particularly important in some countries, and women particularly affected in others, and the problem being spread more evenly between young and adults and men and women in still a third group of countries - the range of appropriate measures must be adapted to the circumstances.

Where possible, appropriate provision for the long-term unemployed should be made available as part of wider programmes so as to avoid isolating the people concerned.

12. The Committee expressed strong support for measures already taken in some Member States, and for those specific measures provided for in the chapter on long-term unemployment in the Council's resolution of December 1986, in particular:

- counselling to identify the particular problems and abilities of individuals, and to provide motivation, particularly for those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. Such counselling should be available at regular and frequent intervals, should take a properly structured form, and should place emphasis on follow-up measures. The special needs of young people who have not yet obtained any access to the labour market should be taken into account.
- job search programmes to assist people to find work and to provide motivation to look for work
- training, including substantial periods of work experience on projects or with companies, designed to suit individual needs

- work experience, both through job experience during training and through temporary work programmes. Where possible, temporary work programmes should include a training element
- help in starting-up businesses for those wishing to become self-employed
- recruitment subsidies where these do not distort the labour market and can be shown to be capable of making up for the disadvantages which the long-term unemployed face in obtaining available jobs.

13. The Committee asked the Commission to study the experiences of the Social Partners with regard to the recruitment and training of the long-term unemployed, with a view to identifying positive actions that the Social Partners could encourage and develop.
14. The Committee expressed concern that, despite the intensification of present measures designed to tackle the immediate problems, and despite its hopes for the transformation of educational and training systems, there would continue to be a serious social problem resulting from long-term unemployment for some time. It therefore stressed the need to provide as far as possible for adequate income support and for early retirement schemes to be open to the long-term unemployed over a certain age.

In order to avoid the isolation and demotivation of the long-term unemployed, efforts should be made to improve their access to and participation in social and non-vocational activities.

15. The Committee took positive note of the Commission's 1988-1990 guidelines for the European Social Fund which will give priority to financing measures to help improve the vocational training and employment opportunities of the long-term unemployed.

The Committee also welcomed the fact that the proposals for reform of the Structural Funds include the fight against long-term unemployment as one of their five priority objectives.

16. In the context of the reform of the Structural Funds aimed at providing financial support for measures in Member States in favour of the unemployed, the Commission was asked to draw up an action programme for the long-term unemployed which should:

- stimulate co-operative action, drawing on practical experience and pilot projects, with a view to identifying and disseminating at Community level successful experience which can form part of national programmes in favour of the long-term unemployed;
- improve the existing systems for the exchange of information and experience (MISEP, ELISE) on action undertaken by Member States, in the planning and implementation of the specific measures set out in paragraph 12.

The systems should be extended to cover the methods, effectiveness and cost of national measures.

Ways should be found of profiting from experience in other areas of the OECD.

- provide more comprehensive and comparable statistical data on long-term unemployment.

Such a programme should be presented to the Council as soon as possible and should be pursued in close and regular contact with the Member States and the Social Partners.

34th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT

List of participants

BELGIUM

Mr HANSENNE Minister for Labour and Employment

DENMARK

Mr DYREMOSE Minister for Labour

Mr HASSENKAM State Secretary,
Ministry of Labour

GERMANY

Mr VOGT State Secretary,
Federal Ministry for Labour and
Social Affairs

GREECE

Ms CHARISSIOU Adviser to the Minister of Labour

SPAIN

Mr ESPINA Secretary-General for Employment

FRANCE

Mr CADET Deputy Permanent Representative

IRELAND

Mr AHERNE Minister for Labour

ITALY

Mr ROCELLI State Secretary,
Ministry of Labour

LUXEMBOURG

Mr JUNCKER

Minister for Labour

NETHERLANDS

Mr de KONING

Minister for Employment and
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PORTUGAL

Mr FELIX

State Secretary,
Ministry of Labour and
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UNITED KINGDOM

Mr ROBINSON

Secretary of State for Employment

COMMISSION

Mr MARIN

Vice-President

REPRESENTATIVES OF WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS

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Mr D'HONDT
Mr DUNKEL
Mr HINTERSCHEID
Mr INGA
Mr KANE
Mr LACA
Mr LARSEN
Mr MASUCCI
Mr PRONK

REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS

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Mr MAIER
Mr MONDELO
Mr PEDERSEN
Mr RICKETTS
Mr RODRIGUEZ
Mr SAUER
Mr TYSCKIEWICZ

C O P A

Mr DE SANTIS
Mr PERCEVAL

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Mr AVANZI
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